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Good evening distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Andreina Barajas Novoa.

When you invest in my education, I want you to know that I am a sophomore at Southern Connecticut State University double majoring in Sociology and Political Science, and I want you to know that a Southern education has allowed me to intern in Congress at 18 years old; I want you to know that I am a child of Mexican immigrants, I am a fruit of their labor, sweat, and tears, and that a Southern education has allowed me to explore the depths of my intersecting identities.

It was through my intro to Sociology course that I discovered intersectionality, and for the first time I felt seen. Since then, I have been able to build upon my understanding of intersectionality and apply it to Angela Davis's explanation of intersectionality of struggle. Intersectionality of struggle as Davis highlights means bringing various social justice struggles together, across national borders. Her explanation of intersectionality of struggles, I think, complements this quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

I constantly thought about Angela Davis and Dr. King as I transcribed the names of Afghan families that called my office for help into an online document. I was an intern attending briefings on Afghanistan, immigration, education, and healthcare, and I constantly wondered how I can bring awareness to struggles across national borders. I wondered how I could do more; I wondered why enough was not being done; I wondered what our commitment to protect women, children, and human life meant if we are failing to do so. I ultimately wondered what this experience meant for me moving forward. This constant state of wonder made me realize how much I want a place in the legislative process, and how much I hope others dare to want one too.

When you invest in Southern students, I want you to know that so, too, are you investing in their many wonders. Without your continued support for higher education, many students will lose the opportunity to explore themselves, the world around them, and most importantly the ability to wonder. I hold very closely Southern's commitment social justice because it is through their initiatives that I learned to lead in my community. I want you to know that Southern has supported my journey to Congress and that your continued support will help cultivate our nation's next leaders.

Thank you.